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Contact: Hanna M. Greer, 525-5848 Emily Wickham, 525-6638

## FRANKLIN COUNTY AWARDED 'COMMUNITY GARDEN OF THE YEAR'

During Tuesday's General Session meeting, Franklin County Commissioners were presented with the 2011 *Growing to Green* Award for Community Garden of the Year. This award was presented to the Commissioners for their creation and support of the Franklin County Gantz Road Gardens. This community garden is located at the corner of Frank and Gantz Roads in Columbus.

In 2009, Commissioners created the gardens in an effort to foster the availability of healthy, fresh and affordable foods for Franklin County residents. The initiative began as a County-led effort to address the needs of the ever growing immigrant Somali population in Franklin County and was thus created by the County Commissioners to help Somali immigrants achieve self-sufficiency.

"We are honored to be selected by the committee as Community Garden of the Year. This project is an example of community collaboration and ecological stewardship," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown.

Plots are open to any resident of Franklin County. Previously, gardeners ranged from local families to school children to immigrant Somali families gardening collaboratively to feed their families.

In 2010 (the second growing season), the garden doubled in size, and a rain harvest system was installed to provide water in an environmentally sustainable way. Additionally, a conservation easement was put in place to preserve the adjoining natural area.

"Not only is this garden providing healthy, fresh affordable foods, but it is doing it in an environmentally friendly way," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Organic practices are encouraged and gardeners have had the opportunity to increase their knowledge through gardener-to-gardener information sharing and programs."

"The Franklin County Gantz Road Community Garden has the unique challenge of working with the Somali Bantus that have made Franklin County their new home," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "These residents wanted the opportunity to sustain themselves and their families by growing their own food. The gardens reflect not only that goal, but the rich array of cultures and blossoming friendships that have been formed while gardening."

Commissioners also recognized Nathan Applewhite and Peggy Murphy during the meeting. Applewhite was awarded the 2011 *Growing to Green* Paul B. Redman Youth Leadership Award, an award given to an outstanding youth gardener. Murphy was awarded the 2011 *Growing to Green* Community Gardner of the Year for her exceptional dedication to her community garden and gardening movement in central Ohio.

Recipients were announced at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual *Growing to Green* Awards on August 25 on the ScottsMiracle-Gro Community Garden Campus. The night honored the hard work of community gardeners throughout central Ohio. Award nominees were judged by the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens' Women's Board, community garden leaders and the American Community Gardening Association.

A program of Franklin Park Conservatory, Growing to Green is Columbus' largest organized effort to promote and provide free community resources for community gardening and city beautification. Franklin County, Franklin Park Conservatory and ScottsMiracle-Gro are proud supporters of the community garden movement in central Ohio.